



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

EU-project: Grundtvig 2 Programme

A EUROPEAN MENTOR PROGRAMME FOR UNIVERSITY WOMEN – AN INTERCULTURAL STUDY

22-25 October 2008, Vaasa, Finland

- Cordinator : **Kvinnliga Akademiker i Vasa r.f., Finland, Sonya Höstman**
- Partners: - **Vereniging voor Vrouwen met Academische Opleiding, VVAO The Netherlands**
 - **Türk Üniversitesi Kadınlar Derneği, TÜKD, Turkey**
 - **Kvinnliga Akademiker i Vasa r.f., Finland**
- Participants: **Aurén Birgitta, Finland**
Bágcı Kilic Gülşen, Turkey
Belet Nuran, Turkey
Doesburg Lydia, the Netherlands
Höstman Sonya, Finland
Joordens Angeline, the Netherlands
Kjerulf Jannica, Finland
Myllyniemi Vivi-Ann, Finland
Okçay Hale, Turkey
Platin Nurgün, Turkey
Terakye Gulsen, Turkey
van Meurs Heleen, the Netherlands
Wessels Fernanda, the Netherlands

The association of Kvinnliga Akademiker i Vasa, Finland has for many years planned an EU-project about mentoring in order to support young academic women and to create a more constructive collaboration between our associations in Europe. A draft project plan and application were prepared already in 2007 while still looking for project partners in the other UWE associations. Our forthcoming partners from Turkey and the Netherlands arrived in Vaasa in December 2007 in order to complete the application with activities in their own countries.

Having received the approvals of the project by the European Commission, delegates from the Dutch and Turkish partners went to Vaasa in the end of October 2008 in order for all partners to jointly study the mentoring subject during four days.

The aim of the project is to support the development of innovative activities, services and practices in **lifelong learning**. The partnership will in this project, study the processes of interactive and intercultural mentorship as a methodology of learning and how to support women in their daily life and work.

The second aim is to **enhance interaction** through intercultural dialogue by mentoring processes.

The project will have direct impact on all members, who are involved in the work and the session and processes

– The theme and topic on "How the private and professional life can be combined in a fruitful work and individual development" will be highlighted in a special seminar during the project. This topic will continuously be touched upon and assessed during the working sessions, but switching the perspective from time to time

The project will establish a European network of female mentors and equip the mentors with innovative methods in their role of helping mentees to develop learning skills in order to become active citizens in their private and professional life. The target groups are female university/higher education graduates and female students in university/higher education graduate and graduate women in their professional life.

The goal of the project

The goal of the project is to conclude a handbook and guidelines with best cases about mentoring for university women, the starting point being the draft guidelines prepared by Sonya Höstman already in the planning phase of the project.

The objectives for the project:

- Enable women to meet and discuss thematically the measures due to the role of mentorship, e.g. the role, the task, the methodology and the contexts of the best practices.
- The support of the different cultures and organisations involved in the project will enrich and diversify the discussions and thematic depth of these discussions.
- Also the different ages of the participants will enrich the debates and the concrete experiences in the field of mentorship.
- The discussions will be held in thematic workshops, named:

1. Role and Intention of a mentor,
2. Organisational view of mentorship, evaluation and mentees,
3. How to support women via non profit organisations,
4. Items for best cases to be highlighted in a handbook or on a CD

Describing the mentoring role model. Why would our members be important in helping young academic women in their carrier and private life.

We describe the key factors that influences a person's willingness and ability to mentor, things one needs to consider if one has decided to become a mentor and how to evaluate the mentors and mentees

We will send a questionnaire to young academic women asking them what they expect from a mentor. In addition, a website will be set up for the purpose of providing information on available mentors in our association to persons interested in having a mentor and a brochure containing information about our mentor programme will be prepared.

- a handbook:
 - Content:
 - a guideline for a mentor programme for our European organisation
 - best cases explained in the handbook
 - the handbook will be put on the European website www.ifuw.org/uwe in order for it be available for use by the European federation and within the local associations within the different member states.
- Explain what subjects or problems you intend to address.

During the first project meeting in Vaasa in October 2008, the workshops were interspersed with interesting presentations on mentoring on related subjects and informal get-togethers during lunch and dinner.

Workshop 1: Role and Intention of a Mentor

The first day the manager of the EU Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) in Finland, Eija Wilén and the regional promoter for CIMO, Gunvor Häggman informed about the Grundtvig Programme

and what kind of important issues we have to take in account. Lydia Doesburg appreciated that Ms Häggman explained to us that our mentor project under the European Grundtvig Life Long Learning Partnership is more process-oriented, meaning that it will have to come to fruition by means of frequent exchanges of data and experiences. *“Mentoring is about growth, finding answers. Start by listening to one another. Where in this project we the Dutch and the Finnish groups will develop our previously started process and help the Turkish group to grow. This is a beautiful example for sharing and supporting.”*

The discussion for the first workshop was about mentoring as a role model for young academic women. Mentoring is a role model, or when a mentor offer support to another person. A mentor has knowledge and experience in an area and shares it with the person being mentored. For example, an experienced researcher might mentor a student researcher or a younger researcher.

The members of the associations of university women are highly skilled women, such as e.g. researches at universities or highly positioned officers and directors in companies and organisations. The elderly members have a lot of experience from their work. It is essential to share this experience with the following generation so that younger persons can benefit from the experience of more senior professionals and, thus, commence their own work from a higher level. The group discussed and clarified the project plan in order for all persons involved to have the insight into the work and the goal of the project.

As not all of the participants in the project have previous experience of mentoring and of using mentoring as a way to support other persons, Sonya Höstman gave a speech about mentoring, more specifically, about the role and intention of a mentor. The main speaker for the first project meeting was PhD (Economic Science) Tua Haldin-Herrgård, an expert in tacit knowledge, who talked about *“Sharing the Unsharable? Tacit knowledge Sharing by Mentoring”*

In today's work life we stand before times of succession and changes in many organizations. This has raised the awareness of difficulties of communicating tacit knowledge. To share abstract and implicit knowledge that is based on personal experience and that cannot be stored in an explicit form in for example databases or manuals poses demands on face-to-face meetings, close relationships and time for reflection. The mentoring process includes all these factors and therefore mentoring is convenient in order to share tacit knowing.

Tua Haldin-Herrgård, 24.10 2008

Angeline Joordans mentioned that *“This is good to be conscious about it, it can help the mentor in her mentoring activities and the mentee in her awareness.*

Our team discussed definitions about mentorship and how to reassure that everyone agrees and understands how to reach our goal. The last day we continued with preparing two questionnaires that we are going to use for mentors and mentees.

Following the project meeting, the practical work of the mentor programme continues within each partner's own organisation. Prior to the next project meeting, which will include a workshop on the organisational view of mentorship, each team needs to collect its own experiences about mentoring mentees in order to share the cases with the other teams at the workshop. We will organise round table discussions with mentors and mentees and organise a seminar about mentoring in each country. Questions that will be discussed are e.g. interpersonal competence, i.e. should a mentor have high level of job experience, job satisfaction, availability of the mentor to the mentee, evaluation of potential mentor-skills e.g.

The result and experience gained will be presented and shared at the next project meeting in May, 2009 in Izmir, Turkey.

During the project meeting in Vaasa we also had the opportunity to take part of different cultural programmes and the first day we were invited to a reception organized by the City of Vaasa. We visited the exhibition at the Museum of Ostrobothnia, Terranova (New Land) and one of the heritage of UNESCO. Terranova tells the story of the rise of the land after the last Ice Age about 20 000 years ago. The land is still rising in the Kvarken and every year about 300 hectare/750 acres of new land appears on the Swedish-speaking coast of Ostrobothnia. In addition, we celebrated the international UN Day on the 24th of October by listening to a speech by the president of UNIFEM in Vaasa, Hilikka Vuorensivu under the topic "Human Rights from a Female Perspective".

These interesting days showed us concrete that UWE is a very important organisation and that it is easy to work and collaborate in a friendly atmosphere, which is one of the pillars of IFUW and UWE:

"IFUW was founded in 1919 after World War I by women graduates who believed in the importance of working together for peace, international understanding and friendship".

**Sonya Höstman, Finland
Coordinator for the EU-project, Grundtvig 2**